X-MEN®

MARK OF CAIN

MARVEL

#4

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X-MEN NOIR: MARK OF CAIN #4

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by FRED VAN LENTE & DENNIS CALERO, with

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You get it?

I *get* it? *I* get it?

Does a bear [redacted] in the woods?

Does your father suck [redacted] in Hell as we speak?

I walk through [redacted] *walls*, Wanda--

Yeah, okay, thanks, Kitty.

I got it.

Question is...

...once Tommy, Robert, whatever he's calling himself these days, is done screwing over Logan and company...

...are we next on the "*Get* [redacted]" list?

Hey, there's one surefire way to guard against that.

"[redacted] over others as they would [redacted] over you."

My horoscope says that every single goddamn morni--

What...

WHUP WHUP WHUP WHUP WHUP

WHUP WHUP WHUP WHUP WHUP

...is that sound...?

WHUP WHUP WHUP WHUP WHUP WHUP WHUP WHUP WHUP WHUP WHUP WHUP

All right, ladies...

...after you.

Hey.

Cyke.

I'm gonna be the one that gets you.

Just thought you'd like to know.

WHUP WHUP WHUP WHUP WHUP WHUP

Look at me.

I'm trembling, here...

...at the sight of pure, distilled ***money*** in my hands.

Reminds me of the old days, boosting jewelers on 47th Street with my brothers Alex and Gabe...

You always been loyal first to Xavier, Cyclops?

You never asked me ***not*** to be loyal to him that I can recall, Tommy.

I'm ***Robert...***

Whatever.

His school for delinquents taught me more techniques, made me a better shot, and earned me more scratch than I ever could have outside.

And even more important than that...

...he has friends in ***high places.***

What the hell...

...*is* this place...?

The Army Air Force calls it a *"Dirigi-Carrier."*

Gentlemen, welcome to *O*N*E*...*

...the Office of National Emergency.

Wheels I know.

So who the hell are you, bub?

Senator Robert Kelly, Republican of New York. Chair of the Judiciary Committee.

The pencil-neck trying to keep the Feds from closing down Genosha Bay?

The one and the same...

"...and I now recognize your voice from when you were waterboarding me back on Genosha Bay, Senator..."

WHERE'S THE GODDAMN CRIMSON GEM OF CYTTORAK YOU PIECE OF [illegible]

Okay. I'm at sea.

What does Senator Pothole care about our score?

If you could string more than three sober hours together you might be able to follow along, Captain.

To everyone else it's obvious--

--***that's*** who we were really working for all along, Logan.

O*N*E.

"Through ***Cain,*** that is. Xavier knew his half-brother's familiarity with the Far East, and Madripoor specifically, made him perfect for the job.

"But Cain knew ***you*** pretty well, too, didn't he, Charles?"

He knew he was working for some bad guys.

After he hired us to steal the gem from the natives, then double-crossed us...

"...rather than show up with the gem in-hand he sent it to New York on a slow boat from China.

"And until he got paid, he wasn't going to tell you which one.

"Didn't turn out to be the wisest tactic.

"The G-Men... what...got a little physical with him.

"Cain tried to make a run for it.

"Except, let me guess, once he arrived on Genosha Bay he was hooded like everyone else.

"He didn't entirely understand where he was being held...

"...until he found out the ***hard way.***"

No wonder his body was found in an open field looking like it had been crushed by some mythical *"Juggernaut."*

How am I doing so far?

Passably.

You have an overly romantic view of my half-brother, though.

He was the one double-crossing ***me***. Holding out on the location of the gem until I ***tripled*** his fee.

"My budget is already strained as it is, training the next generation of... *'soldiers'* for O*N*E.

"Science's atomic engines of destruction will render traditional warfare not just obsolete, but ***unwinnable.***

"Trained, directed antisocial personalities like my *'X Men'* make ***ideal*** operatives in the coming shadow struggle with the Bolsheviks."

You see... my dear brother Cain wasn't just defying me by refusing to tell me where the gem was.

He was defying ***America.***

I couldn't give a rat#@$% about America.

What does this have to do with the flamin' *gem?*

With the gem itself?

Nothing, really.

"More what the gem *represents.*

"When Prince Baran of Madripoor gets it back, he can either magnanimously return it to the autonomous tribal regions in return for greater political influence there...

"...or he can hold the gem *hostage* for the same.

"Genosha Bay has become a political flashpoint, thanks to the Congressional hearings.

"O*N*E needs to transfer its training facility to a new, even more secret extraterritorial location.

"Prince Baran could provide that land to the U.S..."

...*if* they bring him the gem.

Slight snag in your plans, though, Professor... Senator.

While your "X Men" thought they were keeping **me** occupied...

...an associate of mine snuck into the hold and switched the real gem...

...for a most... **sensitive** copy...

DOORRRR

Now I have the gem.

You want it back...

Tommy! Where are you--

Don't just-- STOP HIM!

...you better find me.

And be ready to deal.

TOMMY!

You just gonna leave us here--?

You direct your pleas into the *ether*, Captain.

Your friend--Thomas Halloway--you left behind in Genosha Bay.

Under extreme duress, he retreated from his altruistic façade behind a more extreme personality.

He has donned the behavioral *"costume,"* if you will, of his more violent, more sociopathic--

--and much more ***deceased*** brother, Robert.

To the point, I think, that we must ask ourselves...which twin really ***died*** back on Welfare Island in the fight against Detective Magnus all those months ago?

Yeah?

We'll see about that, Charley.

"We'll just flamin' see."

You pulled off your part in all this without a hitch, Wanda.

I'm pleasantly surprised.

Y-yeah...

Well don't fall over yourself greeting me.

We...may have a *problem*, Robert....

But you've got to believe me, it's *not my fault--*

I'll decide what is and isn't your fault!

Now tell me what you've gone and *screwed up* before I *rip your head off--*

When--Kitty and I brought the gem home--

We saw-- There was a *crack* in it--

--It's a fake too, Robert! Glass!

Cain must have hid the *real* one--Somewhere *else--*

No--*No!* [illegible]

You and the little [illegible] have hid it somewhere!

You're trying to *cheat* me!

KKKK-- Lllllet go--

Either you tell me where it is--

Or I leave you as a negative example for *Pryde* whenever she shows up--

DROP HER!

WHUDD

I knew it.

Hiding in the walls.

Like a rat.

Suck my [illegible]

Gonna cut yours off and shove it sideways up your [illegible]--

Somebody should wash your mouth out.

With their fist.

KRAAKK

You broke my nose!!

[illegible] you, you [illegible]--

KRONCH

Aaaahhhh!

Little *animal*--

ZWOK

Uhhhhh

Good god.

Girl's not housetrained.

And *stay* down!

Now that she's been flushed out...and *down*...

...don't worry about the gem, Wanda.

That *is* the original, even with the crack.

You mean... the original is... *glass?*

"Sure. What the hell are Madripoor tribesmen going to do with a quote-unquote *'precious'* stone in the middle of the jungle?

"The gem's only true value is in its religious and political significance.

"Looked like glass to me when I first lay eyes on it back in Madripoor, but I saw no reason to *advertise* it."

But then you knew that all along, didn't you...

...Professor?

Thought I stalled long enough for you to get here.

I suppose one day I'll learn to stop underestimating you, Mr. Halloway.

You don't really care about the gem, or Senator Kelly's attempts to woo Prince Baran, do you?

This is about me.

You were trying to draw me out. Wanda was working for you all along.

Darling, I never--

Give it a rest, Wanda.

Your ***altruism*** makes you as much of a deviant as the anti-social tendencies of a ***criminal,*** Mr. Halloway.

After our initial encounter, I realized there could be a whole new pathology at work here-- *"heropathy."*

Your connection to my half-brother was something I could exploit.

Did he have ***help,*** going over the side of the Dirigi-carrier?

"That's for me to know.

"Cain was a true brute. You know him. The most use anyone ever got of him was as a blunt instrument...

"...or in this case, ***bait.***"

I can learn as much--if not more-- by studying ***angels*** as demons.

But you disappointed me, Halloway. My hypothesis was that you were a compulsive hero, and nothing I could do to you would change that essential nature.

Instead...you corrupted much faster than I ever could have imagined.

Oh, you mean turning me into Robert?

Well.

About that.

I was faking.

F.B.I.! Don't move!

You heard that man confess to the murder of *Cain Marko*, formerly of Madripoor.

That woman, Wanda Magnus, is his accomplice.

Miss Pryde, over there on the floor, has six outstanding warrants in three jurisdictions.

In order to reduce his parole violation, I imagine Professor X will want to sing to Director Duncan about a secret illegal Federal agency competing with the Bureau.

But now, if you'll excuse me...

"...I have a promise to keep."

You will have no contact with other prisoners.

And almost none with the staff.

You are not allowed writing materials. Or to receive visitors or communication from the outside.

A guard will let you out in your own private exercise yard for an hour a day, weather permitting.

Thus have I described the last remaining days of your life as foreign criminals interred here in Genosha Bay Penitentiary.

And I must say you look sunnier than most upon hearing me do so, Captain.

Oh...it's nothin', Warden Frost.

I gotta kinda...*Providence* watching over me.

So has every con who ever crawled in here thinking he was going to slither out.

"Yeah...'cept I got a better reason than most to believe in mine.

"*My* angel did everything he could to bring in the murderers of a guy who trained him to fight...

"...a guy whose last act of friendship was to betray him.

"I got ***reason*** to have ***faith*** in him. Faith he's ***never*** gonna forget about me an' Judd.

"So good luck keepin' us here, Warden, that's all I'm sayin'. Good flamin' luck.

"You're gonna ***need*** it."

END